

AN APPEAL

TO

FEMALES OF THE NORTH,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

BY

A FEMALE OF VERMONT.

Suffice it to say that it emanated from the pen and *heart* of a *woman*—one who feels deeply for the degradation and misery of one portion of *our* sisters, and laments in secret the apathy of another.—THE AUTHOR.

REPUBLISHED BY THE "ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS FOR ADVOCATING
THE CAUSE OF THE SLAVE, AND IMPROVING THE CONDITION
OF THE FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR."

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY JOHN THOMPSON, E. COR. MARKET & SECOND.

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1838.

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As there has been much that was excellent and convincing said and written relative to slavery, I should deem it quite superfluous to add my mite to the already abundant fund, were it not that a feeling of duty and an increasing interest in the cause of oppressed and degraded human nature, constrain me thus to appeal to the benevolence and religious sensibility of my sisters; if happily by "importunity" their slumbering energies may be awakened to efficient effort for the peaceful and speedy overthrow of a system so entirely at variance with the precepts of the gospel.

I am aware that it requires no small degree of moral courage to enable our sex to appear as the friends of the slave. We must dare to exercise those powers of mind which the Almighty has bestowed upon us, or we shall be driven from this position by the objections and entreaties of those whose views are in opposition to ours. The most formidable barrier that is presented before us is the *political bearing of slavery*. We are gravely told that on this account it is exceedingly unfeminine and intrusive for us to advocate the cause of the enslaved; and that retirement is more congenial with our capacities and habits. This is a specious argument; but, unhappily for those who advance it, it appears to have been coined for this exigency, and applied exclusively to this question,—for we know that the sphere of female action has not always been thus circumscribed. We know that the sympathy and the co-operation of females are solicited in aid of missionary operations—that women are now urged by all that is beneficent in their nature, to assist in sending the teacher of Christianity to heathen India, even when they are assured that

the doctrines he will declare are directly opposed to the political organization, the established customs and long-cherished prejudices of the nation to whom he will go. They are not now cautioned against an interference with the rights of others, and warned of the revolution and bloodshed that may result from the promulgation of these doctrines. No, they are commended for the sacrifices they are making in support of the cause, and told that the blessings of these benighted souls will rest upon them. The alarming thought is not suggested to them, that if these doctrines should prevail, and the Chinese be induced to consign their multiplicity of idols to the flames, this teacher of Christianity may possibly be regarded as an incendiary by those who derive their gain from the sale of images, and forfeit his life by his temerity. No, those who are thus anxious to benefit the distant heathen, do not in this case consult consequences; they act upon the immutable principle *that it is right to do our duty*, and leave the event with Him who can overrule all for good.

And women have been, and still are, appealed to as co-workers with their brethren in the cause of Temperance. Their influence is sought in diffusing the doctrines of Peace. And, astonishing as it may now seem, their aid was once invoked in behalf of Greece and Poland, when their sons were waging physical warfare against their oppressors! It was not then viewed as a derogation from their delicacy nor their dignity, to commingle feelings with their fathers and brothers, or even to transmit the token of their sympathy to those who were contending for freedom. They were not then reproved for meddling with the affairs of rulers and their subjects. Oh, no; they were admired for their zeal and eulogized as angels of mercy, commissioned to bear the balm of hope to desponding breasts!

It is truly surprising that the acute discerners of feminine impropriety have not, ere this late hour, discovered that a participation in these enterprizes was an aberration from female decorum, and kindly remanded woman to the quiet routine of domestic avocations. Such a course would have been in consonance with their present assertions, and might have saved them from the mortification produced by our indiscretion! But the

undisguised truth is, that the opponents of Abolitionism have not been actuated so much by a sense of our departure from correctness of conduct, as by an apprehension that the principles of universal love and equity must ultimately triumph over hatred and oppression, unless the discussion of this question could be checked. They are convinced that woman's voice has not been powerless when raised in behalf of virtue, and therefore, impotent as they may affect to consider our efforts in this cause, it has been their policy to divert our attention from this momentous subject, and thus prevent a concentration of our influence. This must be obvious to every unprejudiced mind; for if the exertions of women, in the instances enumerated, were irreproachable, it surely cannot now reflect indelicacy nor indignity upon us to "remember those in" our midst who are in "bonds, as bound with them," unless it can be clearly demonstrated that our benevolence derives its angelic hue from the remoteness of the object which elicits it, and that the inhabitants of the "isles afar off" have stronger claims upon our sympathy, than the thousands, aye, millions who are perishing at our very threshold! Alas! it is pride—it is bitter, cruel prejudice, united with selfishness, that would blind us to their wants and close our ears to the recital of their wrongs.

But as it is not in accordance with the character of woman to withhold her pity from the distressed—as she has not been wont to "pass by on the other side," but to pour the wine and oil of consolation into the wounded soul, without reference to clime, why is it that she is now so slow to evince her commiseration for the stripped and down-trodden of this land? Is the fountain of feeling so exhausted by our contribution to foreign demands, that we have not left even a tear which may be dropped upon the chain of the American slave, to rust away its blood-stained links and enable his unshackled spirit to exult in the consciousness of renovated manhood? Oh, no, this cannot be; for those hallowed emotions which dignify and adorn the human mind emanate from an exhaustless source—they partake in a degree of the immensity of their Divine origin; and therefore a supply of sympathy sufficient to assuage the sorrows of these "inheritors of woe,"

must yet remain in the hearts of American women, and if it is not manifested on their behalf, it is because each avenue to tenderness has been closed by arguments addressed to our selfishness, our pride and prejudice. An indifference at variance with our nature, has chilled the generous stream! And shall we still indulge this apathy? Shall our religion be dishonored and our country disgraced by crime, and Christian mothers and daughters remain unmoved amid this awful accumulation of guilt? Ah! can we contemplate the condition of the enslaved, and not feel our spirits deeply bowed by the reflection that in the midst of our unequalled professions and privileges, all those ennobling faculties of the soul, which were the birth-gift of our Creator, and were destined to expand throughout eternity, are continually paralyzed, shrouded in ignorance and consigned to the loathsome sepulchre of depravity by the hand of legalized, Christian, republican slavery?

We frequently hear it said that "as we are not connected with slavery, it cannot be obligatory upon Northern females to unite in any efforts for its abolition—that it is entirely a local question, with which we have no right to interfere." Alas! for the corner stones of reformation, if our perceptions of truth and duty can be thus modified to suit our corrupt inclinations and the latitude of our homes,—if the righteous reproof of "sin in high places," is to be restricted by the boundaries of States! The doctrines of Mahomet were not more contracted. And shall we adopt a principle so selfish, and thus cast odium upon the pure and exalted religion of Jesus Christ?—a religion which, in its expansive nature, embraces the very "ends of the earth?" The command of the Most High formerly was, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." And we are instructed by Him who knew all things, that men of other nations are our neighbors; consequently those of our own country must be included, and their transgressions should be reproved. But as it is repeatedly urged that we of the North are not interested in this subject, and therefore that silence is incumbent upon us, let those who make this assertion, exhibit proof that we are not interested, or even implicated, in the continuance of this heaven-

insulting sin, ere they impose silence upon us,—for we have too long been lulled by the delusive chant of Northern innocence, into the belief that we are not abettors of this most flagrant violation of the Divine command.

It is true we do not witness the sale and purchase of God's noblest work. Our ears are not pained by the cry of the auctioneer who sells human beings to the highest bidder, because our laws forbid it: but a little investigation may convince us that, although remote from the scene of this abomination, we are not secure from the contamination, nor the guilt of this traffic. Do not our youth associate with those of slave-holding States, in the literary, mercantile and social circle? Do they not reciprocate the friendship of Southerners, and, unless supernaturally guarded, do they not too frequently imbibe their sentiments? Surely they do, and become familiar with iniquity; and to this intercourse may be traced many of the erroneous sentiments and the vices so prevalent at the North. The poison has been insidiously, but deeply, infused into our moral system; and the lethargic state of public feeling on the subject of slavery, affords painful evidence of its fatal operation. Many among us directly strengthen the hand of the oppressor by their apologies, and thus uphold this complicated system of iniquity—a system which scorns “all competition or comparison, and stands without a rival, secure in the undisputed possession of its detestable pre-eminence.” Are not many of the luxuries which burden Northern tables procured by the lash-extorted labor of the Southern slave? Those delicacies with which we so thoughtlessly regale ourselves, are they not watered by the tears of our sable brethren and sisters? It is even so, and our daily consumption of such articles induces the slaveholder to fasten more firmly the manacles of the poor captives, and upon us *must rest a portion of the guilt.*

Are not the fathers, the brothers, the husbands and sons of Northern women a part of the American Congress? And have not some of these knelt to the image of slavery, “set up in the plain” of the South, even while their abased heads were shadowed by the wings of the proud emblem of our freedom? And have they not made ready and unhallowed sacrifices to it, at what time

the imperious mandate has gone forth? And do not our spirits ignobly acquiesce in this servile surrender of our inestimable birth-right to Southern dictation? Do we cherish no desire that the rich inheritance of unfettered thought, bequeathed to us by our ancestors, may be transmitted unencumbered to those who shall succeed us? Who then can say that Northern females are not interested in the discussion of this question, or that they do not sustain relations to the system of slavery which should enkindle their virtuous indignation, and call forth all the energy of their character for its speedy and utter destruction?

But there are yet other views of this subject, which should excite Northern females to immediate action. If we admit that every intelligent being, as a member of the great family of mankind, has important social duties assigned by the Creator of the universe, so imperative in their nature that no plea of worldly interest or ease can exonerate the individual from their fulfilment; and that among these duties, sympathy with the oppressed and afflicted, and the mitigation of their sorrows as far as is practicable, are emphatically designated, we certainly have an interest in the broken ties, the crushed affections, and unalleviated anguish of the human heart: we are obligated to feel for them and endeavor to lighten their load of misery: and this obligation will remain upon us until He who requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves shall absolve us from all accountability to Him, and thus annihilate our title to humanity. We know that there are hopes and affections which cluster in holy alliance around woman's heart, and are so inwrought with the fabric of her existence, that she recoils from even the menace of a separation; and can we regard with indifference the thrilling fact, that there are now thousands of our country-women from whom all these hopes and affections are sundered by a stroke far more agonizing than that of death? Is there no chord within the hearts of Northern mothers that vibrates, as the grasp of avarice and lust tears the clinging daughter from the arms of a fond mother, and consigns her to perpetual ignominy and servitude? Is no indignity offered to our immortal nature, when our sisters, designed with ourselves to be companions of angels and heirs of interminable joy,

are classed and sold with beasts of the field and perishable merchandize? Can it indeed seem "a light thing unto us," that in their debasement the most sacred emotions of the female soul are trampled upon,—yea, spurned as wholly worthless?—that even the very treasury of feeling is ravaged by unrestrained violence, and its most precious gems sacrificed to the will and scorn of the oppressor? Yet all these cruel bereavements and insults they must endure in unrepining silence: for that gushing forth of maternal solicitude, which in their fairer sisters is revered as the irresistible eloquence of nature, is unsupportable in them; and that sensibility which in civilized life sheds an attractive radiance around the female character, they must suppress, or the tyrants lash may remind them that although deeply afflicted, they are unpitied slaves!

Let it not be said that the pearl of affection is valueless in those of African descent. There are many facts on record that fully refute this assertion, instances wherein attachment has triumphed over every other consideration, and impelled them to destroy the objects of their love, rather than permit them to become the victims of aggravated cruelty. Ah! who can portray the extreme sufferings of body, the nameless and protracted conflicts of mind, which in many instances, like a merciless tempest have shattered all the energies of wowan's soul, and driven it a fearful wreck upon the strand of despair! Flatter not yourselves, I entreat you, with the vain hope that what is here pictured is only the wild imagery of a highly-wrought imagination, and therefore unworthy your serious attention. Happy indeed would it be for the imbruted slave, for our guilt-burdened country, and for future generations, were it so. But alas! not even the pencil of a Raphaël could fully delineate the horrors of this Bastile of the South. The most vivid representation of its terrors are but as the dim shadowing of an awful reality, which eternity alone can unfold! Oh! could we for a season place ourselves in the stead of these heirs of unutterable grief, our souls would be overwhelmed with the waters of bitterness; and we should prefer death to such life: we could then in a faint degree appreciate their woe and mingle our tears and prayers for their relief. And shall we

now, through a false sensibility, shrink from even the contemplation of their wretchedness? Shall we draw the impervious mantle of self-love around our sympathies, and return to our "ceiled houses," and "fullness of bread," forgetful of their nakedness and hunger, and hope to shield ourselves from the arrows of Divine condemnation behind the flimsy breastwork of "*domestic duties*?" Ah! futile hope,—for He who formed the human mind can analyze each motive, and discern the most secret thought. Oh! let us listen to the language of Holy inspiration, and consider well its solemn import: "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain: if thou sayest behold we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it; and he that keepeth thy soul doth not he know it; and shall not he render to every one according to his work." The Lord hath declared, "All souls are mine:" and can we suppose that He is indifferent to the oppression of this portion of His heritage? We may be unmindful of their afflictions,—but He who delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage remembers them. He still sitteth upon the throne of Omnipotence, and maketh his creatures the instruments of His power to effect His purposes of mercy and judgment. A great responsibility rests upon the Christian females of the North. They cannot plead ignorance of their duty, nor inability to discharge it. If their talents are buried in the earth, it will be no extenuation of their guilt, that they "wrapped them in a napkin." The condemnation will be, because these talents were unemployed, when they should have been used to the honor of Him who gave them.

Our sisters of England have done nobly in the cause of Emancipation, and the effects of their labors afford ample and encouraging proof that they have not spent their "strength for nought." Shall we imitate their bright example, or content ourselves with idle admiration of their zeal and firmness? Let us be willing to act in behalf of the oppressed, though the wise and prudent of this world deride us. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master;" and if so, let us cheerfully submit to have our names cast out as evil.

But perhaps some may despair of our accomplishing anything by our labors, because we do not participate in the government of our country. We possess the power to accomplish much, if that power is rightly applied. It is acknowledged that we have influence in private life; and as it is from among those who compose the fireside circle that our statesmen are chosen—our fathers, brothers and husbands, we can, (if our own views are rectified,) while reclining beneath our vine of domestic enjoyment, remind them of the two and a half millions of immortal beings now pining in hopeless bondage, and so enlist their sympathies as to secure their exertions in their behalf. We can labor to eradicate that deep-rooted and unrighteous prejudice against a skin not colored like our own; and we can, in our neighborhood-intercourse, dare to vindicate the aspersed character of our colored brethren. We who are mothers can effectually, though unobtrusively, aid the cause of the oppressed, by instilling into the minds of our precious children an abhorrence of the sin of oppression, and impressing upon their hearts the important truth that all mankind are the children of one common father, and therefore equally the objects of His love and mercy. We exert an influence over our sons and daughters that may yet affect the happiness of thousands; and let us not prove unworthy of this noble trust, but by every possible means endeavor to excite their interest in behalf of this outcast and degraded portion of our fellow creatures. We can diffuse information relative to this wide-spreading sin. We can implore Divine strength to endure with humility the reproach cast upon us by reason of our efforts; and if thus mercifully aided, we can continue to intercede for the deliverance of this people, until our country shall be cleansed from the guilt and disgrace which now pollute it. Thus, through different mediums we may operate upon the moral sense of the nation, and contribute to the purification of public sentiment from the leprosy that has long disfigured and enfeebled it. Oh! if the multiplied and unequalled horrors of this modern Aceldama could be suddenly revealed to our view, they would startle the most indifferent and stimulate them to untiring exertions for the removal of this appalling source of corruption and death from

the land. We may now endeavor to excuse ourselves from this labor, and offer what we may deem satisfactory reasons for our idleness; but they will avail us nothing with Him whose requirements are plain and easily understood, and who "will reward" us "according to our works." We cannot believe that the redeemed soul of the now despised captive will be presented less spotless before the Father's throne, because the prison house of clay from which it had been liberated was of darker hue than that in which we tabernacled while on earth; and if not, then in *that* soul will the Omniscient Judge acknowledge an heir of God, while to us may be addressed the awfully impressive language—
"INASMUCH AS YE DID IT NOT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YE DID IT NOT UNTO ME."